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ABSTRACT

The reading interests of 300 tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students were surveyed and compared to those revealed in previous research. The results indicated that the amount of time students reported reading outside of school per day has decreased slightly since a 1961 study by P. Witty, with females still reading more than males. As in the Witty study, science fiction and sports were popular with the male students in the present study, with romance stories preferred by the female students. The males ranked "Sports Illustrated" as their favorite magazine, while the females selected fashion magazines as their favorites. The boys preferred thriller comics and the girls preferred humorous comics. Although the students in this study, like those from a 1976 study by D. Stachelek, reported friends, teachers, and bookstores as the sources of ideas for reading material selection, they no longer reported librarians as a major source for such information. As in the past, students ranked watching television, listening to the radio, and going to the movies as their favorite leisure time activities, although listening to the radio replaced television viewing as the number one leisure time activity. (RL)

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READING INTERESTS OF TENTH, ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH GRADE STUDENTS

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Masters of Arts degree in Education at Kean College of New Jersey.

April 1982

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ABSTRACT

The reading interests of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students were surveyed and compared between the sexes. The results were also compared with the Witty study conducted in 1961.

The subjects of the study were one hundred students in each of grades ten, eleven, and twelve. A reading interests survey containing twelve questions was administered to the students. Results indicated definite differences in reading preferences between the sexes. The results also implied a shift of reading interests from the 1961 Witty study.

With the knowledge of students' reading interests, librarians can be more selective in ordering books and magazines. The classroom teacher can use this information to capture the attention of the students. The supplemental teacher should be informed of the interests of the below average students to assist in remediation and individualized instruction.

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According to George W. Norvell (1946) "to increase reading skill, promote the reading habit, and produce a generation of booklovers, there is no other factor so powerful as interest". Upon reviewing the writings of Witty (1961) and Strang (1963) it is apparent that high school students have definite preferences in reading material. Barbe (1963) writes that reading interests are the primary goal in the successful teaching of reading. Frink (1939) emphasizes the importance of reading interests in providing effective remedial instruction in reading. Robinson (1955) states that there are definite different reading interests between the sexes.

With the knowledge of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students' reading interests, librarians can be more selective in the ordering of books and magazines so as to have on hand materials that will include the likely choices of the students. The classroom teacher can use such information to capture the attention of the students during reading instruction and to encourage supplementary reading. The supplemental teacher should be informed of the interests of the below average students to promote the basis for work in remediation.

As can be seen in this short review, however, little attention in recent years has been given to investigating the reading interests of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students. Have they changed since 1961? Or are their in-

terests still the same? Can we rely on early research, twenty years old, to establish buying patterns as well as book selecting patterns? On the surface, the answers to these questions should be "no". However, little evidence exists to state explicitly that such is the case.

Hypothesis

To provide additional evidence concerning this topic, a replication of the Witty study was conducted to determine the reading interests of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students twenty years after the original findings were reported. Two hypotheses were formulated: 1) Reading interests of today's high school students will differ from the interests of high school students of previous years. 2) There will be a significant difference in the reading interests of current boys and girls.

Sample

The effort in this investigation was aimed at determining the specific reading interests of 300 students of Linden High School in Linden, New Jersey. A random sample of one hundred students in tenth grade, one hundred students in eleventh grade, and one hundred students in twelfth grade English classes were administered a modification of Witty's reading interests questionnaire. It was assumed that the information that was obtained from the students would be of significance to teachers and librarians because it would aid

in meeting the students' individual needs and in stimulating their reading interests. It was assumed that the results of the survey would make it possible to assist students in their selection of books and would be valuable to teachers and librarians in their selection of classroom materials.

It was further assumed that the questionnaire was reliable and that the students' responses were valid. It was also assumed that if a similar questionnaire was repeated elsewhere that comparable results would have been found.

There were certain limitations to the study. The researchers were limited to one specific school building. The groups chosen were from an urban middle-class socioeconomic area and there was an unequal number of boys and girls surveyed. Limitations also include a modification of Witty's questionnaire to relate to contemporary teenagers so that a true replication is not justifiable.

The questionnaire was administered to all students during the latter part of December, 1981, and January, 1982.

Definitions

Reading Interests are based on interrelated factors including intelligence, general maturity, home environment, past experiences, and cultural opportunities. Most simply, reading interests may be defined as personal preferences.

Procedures

Despite the research already conducted there is still a

vast amount of information to be obtained concerning reading interests of high school students. The effort in this investigation was aimed at determining the specific reading interests of 300 students of Linden High School, in Linden, New Jersey. A random sample of one hundred students in tenth grade, one hundred students in eleventh grade, and one hundred students in twelfth grade English classes were administered a reading interests questionnaire. The survey was administered in December, 1981 and all of the questionnaires were completed during the same week. The data was analyzed and reported according to grade and sex in Tables I through XII a-f. The information that was obtained from the questionnaires was compared between the sexes and with the results of Paul Witty's reading interests questionnaire done in 1961.

The reading interests questionnaire was distributed to the students by their English teachers. The classes selected were of various academic tracts. The students were asked to indicate their grade and sex at the top of the survey. They were told not to put their names on the questionnaire. In the first question the students were asked "how much time do you spend reading outside of school per day?" They were asked to check one of the following responses, 0-1 hours, 1-2 hours, 2-3 hours, or more than 3 hours. The answers on this question will pinpoint the amount of time spent on reading outside of school per day. Questions

number 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 12 were taken from Witty's original survey. Questions number 7 and 11 were taken from Deborah Ann Stachelek's study on reading interests done in 1976. Question number 7 asks the students "what sections of the newspaper do you read?", and question number 11 asks "where do you get most of your ideas for the books you read?" It is assumed that the answers to these questions will provide additional insight into the reading interests and habits of high school students.

Results

Table one illustrates the findings of question one on the reading interests questionnaire. The responses to the question, How much time do you spend reading outside of school per day? are noted below.

Females in all three grades spend more time reading outside of school than males. The largest percentage of all students read 0-1 hours and the percentages decrease as the hours spent reading increase.

Table two outlines the findings of question two on the interests survey. The responses to the question, What kinds of reading do you prefer? are contained here.

Articles in magazines are preferred reading by most of the students. The males in all three grades preferred reading articles in the newspaper, next, followed by fiction. The females, however, preferred to read fiction as their second choice followed by reading the newspaper. More female

Table I

Time Spent Reading Outside Of School Per Day.

Total N=300

Subjects	0-1	1-2	2-3	more than 3 hours	N
Grade 10 Male	68%	22%	6%	2%	45
Grade 10 Female	41%	36%	12%	9%	55
Grade 11 Male	64%	32%	2%	2%	50
Grade 11 Female	46%	42%	12%	0	50
Grade 12 Male	76%	23%	0	0	43
Grade 12 Female	49%	40%	7%	3%	57

students than male students prefer to read poetry. Six percent of the male students in grade 10 specified music and job resumes as other preferred reading. Seven percent of the females in grade 10 chose mythology and fashion as additional selections. Eighteen percent of the males in grade 11 noted sports materials, sexual-oriented materials and thrillers as additional preferences. Eight percent of the females in grade 11 chose the occult and music as other preferred reading. Nine percent of the males in grade 12 specified religion and psychology as other preferred reading. And fifteen percent of the females in grade 12 selected short stories and comics as additional choices. Nonfiction was

Table II

Kinds of Reading Preferred

Total N=300

Subjects	Articles in Magazines	Articles in the Newspaper	Biography	Essays	Fiction	Plays	Poetry	Other
Grade 10 Male N=45	84%	62%	13%	4%	60%	6%	4%	6%
Grade 10 Female N=55	67%	43%	18%	2%	58%	23%	18%	7%
Grade 11 Male N=50	84%	68%	16%	4%	22%	4%	8%	18%
Grade 11 Female N=50	88%	48%	18%	2%	66%	10%	16%	8%
Grade 12 Male N=43	79%	65%	18%	0	30%	6%	6%	9%
Grade 12 Female N=57	82%	45%	21%	2%	52%	14%	17%	15%

listed at least once by all of the students as preferred reading.

Table three illustrates the findings of question three on the reading interests survey. The responses to the question, What kinds of stories do you like to read? are found below.

More males than females in all grades preferred reading stories about sports and science fiction while the females more so than the males preferred reading romance. Most of the students indicated they enjoyed reading adventure stories and stories containing humor. All students selected mystery as a favorite but the girls enjoy mystery more than the boys. Selections in the category marked other contained sexual, horror, fairy tales and health subjects.

Table four contains a list of the students' eight most favorite books. They are arranged according to grade and sex.

The favorite titles of the girls in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades were Forever, Flowers in the Attic, Petals in the Wind, and If There Be Thorns. Gone With The Wind was listed as a favorite in grades eleven and twelve. The boys' interests were broader than the girls'. Boys in grades eleven and twelve indicated Brians' Song and War of the Worlds as their favorite books. The Shining was chosen as the favorite title by the tenth grade boys.

Table III

Kinds of Stories Preferred

Total N=300

Subjects	Adventure	Animal	Career	Humor	Mystery	Romance	Science Fiction	Sports	Westerns	Other
Grade 10 Male N=45	73%	26%	17%	26%	37%	15%	48%	68%	6%	4%
Grade 10 Female N=55	32%	12%	21%	45%	69%	81%	12%	14%	3%	7%
Grade 11 Male N=50	34%	14%	10%	30%	34%	12%	32%	58%	6%	10%
Grade 11 Female N=50	42%	12%	6%	62%	64%	70%	12%	16%	2%	4%
Grade 12 Male N=43	67%	18%	11%	48%	44%	13%	32%	69%	4%	4%
Grade 12 Female N=57	45%	8%	19%	45%	56%	87%	8%	[illegible]	5%	10%

Table IV

Favorite Books

Subjects: Total N=300

Grade 10	The Shining	6%	The Fog	2%
Male	The Dead Zone	4%	Henry Aaron	2%
N=45	Tom Sawyer	2%	Wolfen	2%
	2001 Space Odysey	2%	Amnityville Horror	2%
Grade 10	Forever	20%	Go Ask Alice	5%
Female	Flowers in the Attic	10%	Wifey	5%
N=55	Petals in the Wind	7%	Endless Love	3%
	If There Be Thorns	7%	Miss Jane Pittman	3%
Grade 11	No One Gets Out Alive	4%	2001 Space Odysey	2%
Male	The Illiad	4%	Brian's Song	2%
N=50	Sybil	2%	Count of Monte Cristo	2%
	War of the Worlds	2%	Ghost Story	2%
Grade 11	Flowers in the Attic	8%	The Thorn Birds	4%
Female	Petals in the Wind	8%	Evergreen	4%
N=50	Gone With The Wind	6%	That Was Then This Is Now	4%
	Ghost Story	6%	The Bible	2%
Grade 12	Jubilee	4%	Jaws	2%
Male	Roots	2%	Alien	2%
N=43	War of the Worlds	2%	Silas Marner	2%
	The Godfather	2%	Brian's Song	2%
Grade 12	Gone With The Wind	19%	To Kill A Mockingbird	7%
Female	The Promise	14%	Petals in the Wind	5%
N=57	Forever	8%	If There Be Thorns	3%
	Flowers in the A-tic	8%	Rage of Angels	3%

Table five illustrates the findings of question five on the interests survey. The responses to the question, What books do you like to read other than storybooks?, are noted below.

Table V

Types of Books Liked Other Than Storybooks

Total N=300

Subjects	Careers	Famous People	People of Other Lands	Space Travel	Travel	Other
Grade 10 Male N=45	44%	51%	4%	17%	22%	2%
Grade 10 Female N=55	30%	67%	16%	7%	21%	3%
Grade 11 Male N=50	12%	44%	8%	24%	20%	12%
Grade 11 Female N=50	28%	56%	14%	8%	6%	4%
Grade 12 Male N=43	34%	55%	9%	25%	20%	
Grade 12 Female N=57	28%	45%	15%	2%	28%	3%

In this nonfiction area, the majority of the students preferred to read books about famous people. Careers appeared to be their second choice. More males than females enjoyed books about space travel and more females than males enjoy reading about people of other lands. All students

except the females in grade eleven indicated they liked books about travel. The students listed sports, the occult, fashion and biology as additional interests.

Table six illustrates the answers to the question, Do you prefer to read paperbacks or hard cover books?

Table VI

Preference of Paperbacks or Hard Cover Books

Total N=300

Subjects	Paperbacks	Hard Cover	Either	Neither
Grade 10 Male N=45	51%	8%	24%	
Grade 10 Female N=55	67%	2%	18%	
Grade 11 Male N=50	48%	8%	30%	8%
Grade 11 Female N=50	74%	8%	12%	
Grade 12 Male N=43	62%	13%	11%	
Grade 12 Female N=57	68%	3%	21%	

Paperback books are the overwhelming favorite among all students in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Many of the students answered that it didn't matter to them which

type of book they read, but eight percent of the males in grade eleven stated that neither type was desirable.

Table seven contains the answers to question seven on the survey which asks, What sections of the newspaper do you read? The comics and amusement sections of the newspaper are read by the largest number of students of both sexes in grades ten, eleven, and twelve. The front pages and the want ads are also popular areas of interest. The sports page is read by more males than females throughout the three grades. More females than males prefer Dear Abby and the social page. Many students of both sexes in all three grades indicated that they read the advertisements, local news, and world news. The male and female students in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades specified the obituaries as an area of the newspaper that they read, although the number of students reading this section was small. The female students in all three grades specified the horoscope as another preferred area of the newspaper.

Table eight shows the eight favorite magazines of the high school students.

At all levels the males consistently ranked Sports Illustrated as their favorite magazine. The females at all levels selected the fashion magazines as their favorites. Other popular magazines listed were Jet, Ebony, People, and Time.

Table VII

Sections of the Newspaper Read

Total N=300

Subjects	Front Page	Editorial Page	Social Page	Sports Page	Financial Page	Comics	Want Ads	Advertise-ments	Social News	World News	Dear Abby	Amuse-ment	Other
Grade 10 Male N=45	44%	11%	13%	71%	11%	71%	44%	22%	24%	17%	11%	62%	2%
Grade 10 Female N=55	61%	16%	27%	21%	5%	81%	61%	47%	27%	18%	74%	74%	18%
Grade 11 Male N=50	50%	8%	8%	72%	0	74%	52%	32%	28%	18%	20%	60%	4%
Grade 11 Female N=50	72%	16%	26%	38%	2%	86%	40%	32%	38%	24%	70%	70%	10%
Grade 12 Male N=43	79%	13%	13%	79%	7%	67%	67%	35%	53%	35%	23%	74%	2%
Grade 12 Female N=57	45%	8%	40%	26%	5%	84%	61%	47%	40%	15%	68%	80%	15%

Table VIII

Favorite Magazines

Subjects:	Total N=300			
Grade 10	Sports Illustrated	34%	Mad	15%
Male	Jet	20%	People	8%
N=45	Ebony	17%	Hot Rod	8%
	Playboy	11%	Creem	8%
Grade 10	Ebony	32%	Essence	14%
Female	Right On	21%	Vogue	14%
N=55	Jet	20%	Cosmopolitan	14%
	Teen	20%	Creem	5%
Grade 11	Sports Illustrated	36%	Playboy	10%
Male	Creem	16%	Rolling Stone	8%
N=50	Sport	14%	Time	6%
	Mad	14%	Science News	6%
Grade 11	Seventeen	46%	Reader's Digest	12%
Female	Teen	24%	Glamour	10%
N=50	Time	22%	Vogue	8%
	People	18%	Sports Illustrated	6%
Grade 12	Sports Illustrated	37%	Playboy	11%
Male	Ebony	16%	Time	9%
N=43	Jet	13%	Penthouse	6%
	Newsweek	13%	People	6%
Grade 12	Vogue	42%	Mademoiselle	22%
Female	Cosmopolitan	36%	Ebony	10%
N=57	Glamour	29%	Jet	8%
	Seventeen	22%	Playgirl	7%

Table nine shows the eight favorite comic books of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students.

The Archie comic books were listed as a favorite at all grade levels and by both sexes. Other favorite comic books were The Hulk, Blondie, Beetle Bailey, Richie Rich, Peanuts, Superman, and Spiderman.

Table IX

Favorite Comic Books

Subjects:	Total N=300			
Grade 10	The Hulk	24%	Beetle Bailey	6%
Male	Archie	11%	Peanuts	6%
N=45	Thor	8%	Ghost Rider	4%
	Spiderman	8%	Silver Surfer	4%
Grade 10	Archie	20%	Blondie	9%
Female	Popeye	12%	Superman	5%
N=55	Richie Rich	12%	Casper	5%
	Peanuts	9%	Spiderman	3%
Grade 11	Richie Rich	8%	The Hulk	4%
Male	Beetle Bailey	6%	Dennis The Menace	4%
N=50	Blondie	6%	Spiderman	4%
	Archie	4%	Sad Sack	2%
Grade 11	Archie	22%	Casper	2%
Female	Dennis the Menace	6%	Richie Rich	2%
N=50	Mad	6%	Popeye	2%
	Walt Disney	4%	The Hulk	2%
Grade 12	Archie	4%	Blackpanther	4%
Male	Richie Rich	4%	Beetle Bailey	2%
N=43	Superman	4%	Flash	2%
	Ironman	4%	Batman & Robin	2%
Grade 12	Archie	29%	The Hulk	5%
Female	Richie Rich	15%	Spiderman	5%
N=57	Blondie	7%	Casper	2%
	Peanuts	7%	Superman	2%

Table ten gives the favorite comic strips of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students.

Blondie, The Family Circus, Ziggy, Peanuts, and The Lockhorns were popular comic strips listed by all students at all grade levels. Beetle Bailey, Nancy, and Hi & Lois were also specified.

Table X

Favorite Comic Strips

Subjects:	Total N=300			
Grade 10	Blondie	35%	Peanuts	13%
Male	Beetle Bailey	22%	The Lockhorns	8%
N=45	Family Circus	20%	Nancy	8%
	Ziggy	13%	Hagar The Horrible	8%
Grade 10	Blondie	60%	Ziggy	12%
Female	Family Circus	38%	The Lockhorns	10%
N=55	Nancy	29%	Beetle Bailey	9%
	Peanuts	21%	Hi & Lois	7%
Grade 11	Blondie	30%	Family Circus	8%
Male	The Lockhorns	22%	Peanuts	6%
N=50	Beetle Bailey	20%	B.C.	6%
	Ziggy	14%	Funky Winkerbean	6%
Grade 11	Family Circus	34%	Ziggy	20%
Female	Blondie	32%	The Lockhorns	16%
N=50	Dennis the Menace	26%	Hi & Lois	14%
	Peanuts	24%	Funky Winkerbean	14%
Grade 12	Blondie	25%	Hagar The Horrible	11%
Male	Family Circus	18%	Ziggy	11%
N=43	The Lockhorns	16%	Peanuts	9%
	Beetle Bailey	11%	Dennis the Menace	9%
Grade 12	Blondie	64%	Nancy	31%
Female	Family Circus	43%	Hi & Lois	22%
N=57	Ziggy	35%	The Lockhorns	19%
	Peanuts	31%	Beetle Bailey	12%

Table eleven illustrates the findings of question eleven on the reading interests questionnaire. The responses to the question, Where do you get most of your ideas for the books you read? are noted below.

There were mixed responses on the sources where students go for ideas for books to read. A high percentage of students read books recommended by friends. Other students read books

Table XI

Sources for Ideas for Books Read

Total N=300

Subjects	Teachers	Parents	Friends	Librarians	Book-Stores	Book Reviews	Bestseller Lists	Myself	Other
Grade 10 Male N=45	28%	37%	48%	11%	51%	37%	33%	11%	4%
Grade 10 Female N=55	14%	23%	72%	12%	30%	20%	38%	10%	18%
Grade 11 Male N=50	18%	20%	48%	8%	18%	10%	8%	12%	12%
Grade 11 Female N=50	32%	26%	78%	12%	42%	24%	26%	8%	2%
Grade 12 Male N=43	53%	18%	46%	16%	20%	11%	11%	14%	12%
Grade 12 Female N=57	33%	8%	75%	7%	40%	28%	36%	7%	7%

recommended by parents, teachers, and bookstores. Many students stated that they get ideas for books to read from themselves or from family members other than their parents such as brothers, sisters, or cousins. Movies seen by students were also a source of ideas for books to read, but television was not mentioned by the students. A small percentage of students of both sexes and at all grade levels read books recommended by librarians.

Tables twelve through seventeen indicate the students' preferences of the following activities; going to the movies, listening to the radio, reading comics, reading magazines, reading the newspaper, reading stories in books, and watching television. The students were asked to rank these activities according to their preferences. The results are noted in Tables XII a-f.

The majority of the students of both sexes and at all three grade levels indicate listening to the radio as their favorite activity. Watching television and going to the movies are also preferred. Reading comics, reading magazines, reading the newspaper, and reading stories in books were indicated less frequently by the students as favorite activities. The percentages in each area do not add up to one hundred percent because many of the students did not follow directions when answering this question.

Table XIIa

Activity Preferences - Grade 10 Male

Total N=45

Rank	Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio	Reading Comics	Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper	Reading Books	Watching Television
1. High	13%	62%	0	2%	2%	2%	26%
2.	26%	13%	4%	0	2%	4%	24%
3.	15%	17%	4%	6%	6%	0	26%
4.	4%	2%	26%	22%	13%	6%	0
5.	2%	0	15%	13%	13%	17%	4%
6.	8%	2%	4%	22%	17%	11%	0
7. Low	2%	0	20%	2%	13%	24%	2%

Table XIIb

Activity Preferences - Grade 10 Female

Total N=55

Rank	Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio	Reading Comics	Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper	Reading Books	Watching Television
1. High	5%	60%	2%	2%	2%	3%	16%
2.	20%	18%	5%	9%	3%	12%	23%
3.	34%	7%	5%	5%	5%	10%	21%
4.	10%	0	18%	30%	12%	5%	12%
5.	10%	3%	21%	20%	21%	9%	3%
6.	5%	2%	21%	14%	16%	25%	9%
7. Low	5%	0	16%	9%	29%	25%	5%

Table XIIc

Activity Preferences - Grade 11 Male

Total N=50

Rank	Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio	Reading Comics	Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper	Reading Books	Watching Television
1. High	18%	48%	2%	2%	0	2%	26%
2.	14%	32%	2%	2%	6%	6%	38%
3.	32%	10%	8%	24%	8%	2%	14%
4.	6%	2%	24%	26%	34%	2%	2%
5.	10%	0	18%	20%	26%	12%	8%
6.	4%	4%	24%	24%	16%	14%	8%
7. Low	12%	2%	14%	0	4%	56%	2%

Table XIId

Activity Preferences - Grade 11 Female

Total N=50

Rank	Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio	Reading Comics	Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper	Reading Books	Watching Television
1. High	24%	44%	0	0	2%	8%	16%
2.	24%	18%	2%	4%	4%	26%	16%
3.	20%	12%	8%	24%	8%	2%	20%
4.	10%	8%	20%	20%	18%	8%	10%
5.	4%	2%	16%	36%	16%	14%	8%
6.	6%	6%	22%	10%	20%	20%	8%
7. Low	6%	4%	26%	0	26%	16%	16%

Table XIIe

Activity Preferences - Grade 12 Male

Total N=43

Rank	Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio	Reading Comics	Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper	Reading Books	Watching Television
1. High	20%	53%	0	4%	0	0	18%
2.	23%	18%	0	4%	2%	0	39%
3.	30%	16%	2%	9%	11%	2%	16%
4.	6%	4%	20%	25%	32%	4%	4%
5.	4%	0	23%	34%	20%	6%	4%
6.	0	0	23%	11%	16%	34%	2%
7. Low	4%	0	20%	0		41%	4%

Table XIIf

Activity Preferences - Grade 12 Female

Total N=57

Rank	Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio	Reading Comics	Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper	Reading Books	Watching Television
1. High	26%	43%	2%	5%	0	3%	17%
2.	24%	19%	3%	8%	0	0	45%
3.	33%	29%	5%	5%	2%	7%	15%
4.	7%	2%	22%	29%	7%	10%	15%
5.	2%	2%	24%	29%	17%	21%	0
6.	3%	0	14%	15%	31%	31%	0
7. Low	2%	0	22%	3%	38%	23%	3%

CONCLUSIONS

Table I indicates that the female students spend more time reading outside of school than do the male students. The largest percentage of students read 0-1 hours per day. The students in Witty's study read an average of one hour and one-third per day with the girls reading more than the boys.

Table II presents the pupils' preferred types of reading. In the Witty study, girls preferred fiction and boys preferred the newspaper. Currently both sexes prefer reading articles in magazines. Girls choose fiction as their second choice followed by reading the newspaper. Boys choose reading articles in the newspaper as their second choice followed by fiction. Small percentages of students reported a liking for poetry, plays, or essays in both studies.

The kinds of stories preferred by students were similar to the findings of Witty. Science fiction and sports were popular with the male students while romance is a favorite among the female students.

The favorite books of the male students are different in both studies. No similar titles were found. The favorite books of the female students are also different from Witty's findings except Gone With The Wind was mentioned in both studies.

The majority of students in both studies preferred famous people as the subject for types of books liked other

than storybooks. The males in both studies liked books about space travel and travel while the females liked reading about people of other lands and careers. The male students in the current study prefer books about careers which is a change from the Witty study.

The findings presented in Table VI were compared with Witty's study and Stachelek's study conducted in 1976. The majority of the students in all three studies prefer reading paperback books, although many students in the current study indicated that paperbacks or hardcover books were acceptable.

Table VII indicates the sections of the newspaper preferred by the students. The front page, the comics, and the amusements are read by the students in Stachelek's study and the current study. Differences between the sexes were indicated in the present study. More male students read the sports page and more female students read Dear Abby and the social page.

In the Witty study, the favorite magazines of both sexes were picture magazines such as Life and Look. In the current study the males ranked Sports Illustrated as their favorite magazine. The females selected fashion magazines as their favorites.

Table X contains a list of the favorite comic books. Both sexes listed the Archie comic books as a favorite followed by Superman, Spiderman, and Richie Rich. There were sex differences reported in the Witty study. The boys pre-

ferred thriller comics such as Superman and the girls preferred humorous comic books such as Archie.

The comic strip liked by all students in the Witty study was Dick Tracy, while Blondie is the current favorite. Nancy, Peanuts, and Dennis the Menace are liked by students in both studies.

Friends, teachers, and bookstores are the sources of ideas for book reading indicated by the students in Stachelek's and the current study. Libarians were a source for ideas in the Stachelek study but only a small percentage of students in the current study seek out librarians for book suggestions.

Tables XII a-f contain the results of the students' ranking of seven activities in order of preference. The majority of the students of both sexes indicate listening to the radio as their favorite activity. Watching television and going to the movies are also preferred. In the Witty study, the students indicated watching television as their top choice followed by listening to the radio and going to the movies.

IMPLICATIONS

Although it is twenty years since Witty conducted his study on high school students' reading interests, there are many similarities between the results of the two studies. The amount of time students reported reading outside of school per day has decreased slightly, but the females still read more than the males. The kinds of stories, types of

reading, and types of non-fiction books preferred by the students parallel the Witty research. However, sex differences are noted in these areas. The students' favorite books, magazines, comic books, and comic strips have changed in the past twenty years. These changes should be regarded by teachers and librarians when ordering materials for their high school students.

Similarities existed between the current study and Stachelek's research performed in 1976. Certain sections of the newspaper were read by both sexes in both studies, while other areas of the newspaper were read mostly by the males or mostly by the females. There were commonalities among the sources where students go to for ideas for books, but librarians are no longer a major source for this information. Perhaps the librarians should concentrate on developing a greater impact upon what students read.

When Witty performed his research on reading interests in 1961, he was concerned with the popularity of television and its threat to reading. The students in his study ranked watching television as their favorite leisure time activity, followed by listening to the radio, and going to the movies. Results are similar today except listening to the radio is now number one with the students. Witty suggests several recommendations "to offset the threat of the mass media". Since the mass media is here to stay and will continue to grow, these suggestions are worth repeating.

The teachers should help students to develop more efficient reading habits and skills so they will enjoy the act of reading as well as the results. Teachers should be well acquainted with literature for youth and try to provide an assortment of reading materials to satisfy and extend wholesome interests. Parents should set a good model for their children to emulate by reading books for information and for pleasure. As a result teenagers may become more motivated toward reading.

RELATED RESEARCH

Developing permanent interests in reading must be a primary goal of every teacher regardless of the subject area. Only by developing permanent interests in reading, along with the mastery of basic skills, can reading instructions be said to be successful (Barbe, 1961). As far back in history as the writings of Abbot (1902), the importance of utilizing pupils' interests to link them to new interests has been stressed. Studies of adolescents' interests in reading have been made on the assumption that if we can discover what an adolescent's interests are, we, as teachers, should be able to help him or her develop wider and deeper interests (Norvell, 1959). Teachers should recognize that any adolescent interest may produce a desire to read. But, are high school teachers aware of their students' interests in reading? According to J. Harlan Shores (1964), high school teachers' reports of the reading interests of their students differ from the students' own reports of their reading interests. Teachers underestimate the strong interest in mystery stories and in the social studies. Concern with personal and social problems, especially those related to the opposite sex, are overestimated by high school teachers. From this evidence it is apparent that additional and current research into high school students' reading interests is essential in relating to students of this age group.

Many studies have been conducted into the sex differences and popular areas of interest of high school students. Studies indicate that sex is probably the most powerful

single determiner of reading interest (Yoder, 1968). Norvell's (1946) study reports on literary selections made by pupils' grade in school, sex and level of intelligence. Both sexes reacted favorably to adventure; humorous poems, stories, and essays, (except where the humor was of the subtle type); poems and stories of patriotism; stories of mystery and games; and animals. Boys were more favorably inclined than girls to strenuous adventure, including war, to stories of wild animals, to science, and to speeches. Girls reacted favorably to romantic love, to sentiment in general, and poems and stories of home and family life.

Norvell (1950) states evidence is very strong that selections which depend upon artistry rather than upon content seldom make a hit with secondary children. Boys and girls enjoy all types of narrative material except with one exception: boys reject narratives in which girls or women play leading roles.

The ranking of literary types are in this order: novel, play, the short story, biography, essay, poetry, the letter, and lastly, the speech. Girls enjoy seven of the light literary types. Better liked by boys is the speech, though spread between the rankings of boys and of girls is not great in enjoyment of the novel, the short story and biography (Norvell, 1946).

Sex differences in reading interests of high school students have been investigated widely. High school girls were

surveyed (Elder and Carpenter, 1929) to discover what they like to read. Most popular titles, the kinds of fiction in order of their preference, the magazines which they read most, and the physical makeup upon their choice of books was what these investigators were questioning. It was found that there is a definite development in reading tastes from the love story and mystery story read in the first two years of high school up to the character studies and realistic stories read by older pupils.

Johnson (1932) conducted a study that revealed that girls read more books than boys. Johnson (1932) and Scharf (1973) both agree that boys spend more time in reading magazines and newspapers than girls. According to Smith (1956), more newspapers and magazines than books are read especially by older students.

There is a definite sexual preference to the sections read in the newspapers. Scharf (1973) states that girls read book reviews, letters to the editor, fashion, society news, movie ads, and the music sections. Males, on the other hand, prefer reading sports, world, war and crime news. Johnson (1932), Smith (1956), and Andrew and Easley (1959), concur that the comic section of the newspaper is popular among both sexes and at all age levels. The three favorite sections, in order, are the comics, the sports page, and the front page. Picture sections are always popular (Smith, 1956).

According to Andrew and Easley (1959) magazines tend to center around pictorial, sports, fiction and human interest stories.

Boys are most interested in adventure books, and girls prefer books about home, school and children (Johnson, 1932 and Smith, 1956). Females prefer reading poetry, drama, autobiographies and novels according to Scharf (1973) and Yoder (1978), indicating the female readers are interested in the introspective and affective aspects of characters and actions. Boys are enthusiastic about books and magazines concerned with automobiles (Smith, 1956). Biographies are preferred by males (Smith and Eno, 1961, Scharf, 1973 and Smith, 1956). Poetry and plays are read only when they are assigned except for a few students in dramatic groups who read drama for enjoyment (Smith, 1956).

Yoder (1978) states that girls prefer a female protagonist, but will read some stories with a male protagonist. The setting in the books chosen by girls generally takes place within a specific time limit, such as a summer or a school year. The adolescent girl vicariously experiences dating, career options, family living and marriage through the novel as she projects herself into these future roles. Girls appear to have no strong preference for stories with closed setting. Girls are willing to read stories with male protagonists, providing other factors, such as theme and plot, are significant.

On the other hand, Yoder (1978) reveals that novels which appear favorable to boys deal with external actions and things, rather than people and emotions. Adventure must be lively, may include bizarre happenings, and can contain several different subplots and a brief resolution. Boys prefer stories with physical settings that are open, outdoors, or moving from place to place. Males reject stories with male protagonists when the plots were romantic or introspective, especially when emotional reactions represent a significant part of the plot.

Smith and Eno (1961) asked students in grades seven through twelve, "If you could have a writer write a story-to-order for you, what would you have him put in it?" Boys' favorites seemed to involve action, with this appeal reaching a climax in the tenth and eleventh grades. Sex stories maintained consistent interest for boys throughout junior and senior high school, but the appeal of simple sports stories and of animal stories declined. Biography was practically an added interest for senior boys.

A persistant interest for girls, according to Smith and Eno (1961) was romance. Mystery, comedy, and career stories allured girls of all grades. Sports, sea, animal, and western stories, so popular with boys, were of negligible interest to the girls. High school girls showed added interests in novels with religious, historical, and biographical backgrounds.

There is growing interest in vocational guidance, psy-

chology, and technical and scientific subjects (especially aeronautics, television, and automobiles) among high school students (Smith, 1956).

Brink (1939) conducted a survey of high school students and found that reading interests change during the four year high school period. Seniors evidenced more interest in non-fiction than freshmen. Sex differences also become apparent since boys show more interest than do girls in scientific, technical, and vocational books. Classics which have been favorites for years are still widely read, but there seems to be increased interest in books which have been written recently, especially biography, travel, and books which adults are reading.

Students are not generally inclined to like subtle humor, poetry, long passages of description, letters, editorials and useful information in newspapers, philosophy, religion, music, art, drama, political and historical subjects. They do not like reading which has difficult vocabulary and sentence structure, wordiness, slow movements, too much sentimentalism, monotony, and characters who are old. Students favored books having the opposite characteristics.

Paul Witty in 1961 conducted a study of pupils' interests in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. Three hundred pupils at each grade level from Chicago area schools were surveyed. Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls were included at each grade level. The interests chosen for study were revealed

by the pupils' responses on a questionnaire concerning their voluntary preferences in television, recreation, reading, and vocational and educational choices.

The results of the study indicated that the students spent only a little more than one hour each day reading as compared to several hours daily spent on watching television, listening to the radio, and going to the movies. The questionnaire, in the area of reading, established fiction books to be rated the highest by students. Poetry, essays and drama were less frequently read. Stories of famous people were liked best in the non-fiction group. Boys showed a preference toward adventure, mystery, and science fiction, while the girls were more inclined to choose stories involving romance.

The findings of Witty's study are now twenty years old. The researchers in the current study have attempted to determine if students' interests have changed as the world has changed, and students have changed along with it. Although the current investigation has sampled one hundred students from grades ten, eleven, and twelve, and has updated the original questionnaire so as to relate to contemporary teenagers, Powers (1978) has replicated the original Witty study without variation. She has discovered that girls reported that they spend more time reading than do boys, which is in agreement with Witty's study. However, students in the Power study do not appear to be reading as much as they did at the time of

the Witty study. Students reported that they use the public library less and express a more pronounced interest in fiction. Boys and girls have remained relatively constant in selecting the kinds of stories they prefer. Boys continue to choose stories involving action and adventure, while girls continue to prefer romance, humor, and mystery. Essays, plays, and poetry continue as the least favored types of reading for all students in grades nine through twelve. However, while the Witty population included the classics among their favorite books, currently the preference is for contemporary novels.

Picture magazines such as Life and Look were found to be the favorites at the time of the Witty survey. In the Powers study, categories of types of magazines rather than specific titles were used. The girls were found to enjoy Seventeen in both studies. For boys who previously enjoyed Life and Look, the preference here was for sports magazines. In addition to news and current events types of magazines, boys also choose mechanics and adult magazines. Black magazines, not included in Witty's study, are also preferred. Digests are less often preferred than they were in the past.

When asked to rank various activities, including reading books, magazines, newspapers, and comics, in their order of preference, a similarity exists between the results of the Witty and Powers studies. In each instance, pupils at all grade levels, girls as well as boys, list all reading activities as their least favorites. Modern technology has provided

means of communication that require minimum effort on the part of the participant. Reading demands more exertion and skill but also offers more of a choice. Teachers need to be aware of their students' dedication to the audio-video media which is producing growing competition with reading as the years go on. Teachers need to be concerned that their students love books and desire to continue reading over a lifetime instead of reducing it to a school oriented activity.

The teachers' behavior is an important factor in developing students' interests in reading. The teacher who is not interested in reading or does not find the time to read, cannot be expected to develop an interest in reading on the part of the students. A teacher who dislikes poetry is not likely to make the reading of poetry rewarding and enjoyable for the students. If books are not important to parents, they are not likely to achieve any importance for their teen-agers. Research indicates that students need guidance in developing their interests in reading. Handlan (1945) conducted a study to determine whether students left completely free to choose what they read showed increasing ability to improve in their selection of books. Responses by 161 students in grade ten were collected from tests, check lists, questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of the study: 1) Students read the books that were most easily accessible; 2) Students' general interests and reading interests are not the same; 3) Very bright students

are not reading up to capacity; 4) Boys and girls from limited backgrounds need assistance from teachers and librarians to develop an interest in a variety of books; 5) As early as grade 10, many students are tiring of juvenile books and are reading contemporary novels for adults. They need help in setting up standards for evaluating this type of literature. Teachers, librarians, and parents should recognize the students' need for guidance when selecting types of reading material.

In another study on adolescent reading, Butler (1956) found that it is necessary to have in our schools and libraries an adequate number of adults able and willing to provide some form of personal guidance to young people in their selection of books. Also, evidence was provided that stressed the importance of book selection by teachers and librarians, since the reading tastes of the students in the study had been conditioned by the books made available to them.

Teachers need to be aware of students' interests when planning for instruction. It is not enough for teachers to be knowledgeable in what students ought to read. They must keep abreast of what students like to read. Becoming acquainted with the most popular book categories offers teachers a framework from which to build independent reading assignments (Stachelek, 1976).

Bear (1956) developed a proposal to determine the read-

ing habits and interests of students early in the school year so that an intelligent reading program can be prescribed for each student. A questionnaire was distributed to assist the English teacher in defining the abilities and interests of each class at the beginning of the school year to provide knowledge when it is most needed. With this information, teachers may be inspired to help each student broaden his horizon.

La Brant (1936) conducted a study based on the conviction that greater participation by students with teachers in the planning of instruction will produce favorable results. The pupils developed four criteria to guide their reading: 1) Is my reading varied as to types? 2) Is my reading varied as to subject matter? 3) Is my reading varied as to nationality? 4) Is my reading varied as to time? These criteria have been met through the free reading program to a higher degree than through the set or prescribed course. The results of this study provide an alternative method of reading instruction allowing more student contributions in its planning.

Helen Hus (1956) summarizes six opportunities for promoting reading interests through basic reading instruction: 1) It develops positive attitudes toward reading: 2) It places emphasis on interpretive and evaluative meaning; 3) It promotes independence in reading and in locating materials; 4) It develops the habit of reading and turning to reading for

assistance in the solution of personal problems, in meeting individual needs, and in providing fun and humor; 5) It provides a standard of taste against which to compare and evaluate individual reading; 6) It offers experience with a wide range of subject matter which stimulates the search for related materials.

The interests of young people are varied and based on several interrelated factors such as intelligence, general maturity, home environment, geographical location, past experiences, and cultural opportunities (De Boer, 1958). Interests of young people change within individuals and from one generation to the next. External events and social change affect the interests of youth most profoundly. G. Robert Carlsen (1975) directed a team of research assistants who interviewed high school students from three Iowa City schools in 1974 to discover their reading interests. It was found that teenagers are interested in books with a positive statement about the meaning of life, hope for the future, and a recognition of the importance of human relationships. In comparing their current findings with past studies, the writers point to the 1960's, when relevance in literature was the dominating theme for young adults. Relevance in books can be defined as alienation, disillusionment with government, escape from reality through drugs, the generation gap, and social injustice for minorities. Current book selections show young people looking for heroes worth modeling after, values worth upholding,

and a sense of hope.

Only the greatest of the literature survives the generations and social changes. According to De Boer (1958) for over thirty years only Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and Treasure Island survived at the head of the best-liked books for boys throughout the period. Carlsen states that the usual reading patterns of high school students progresses from teenage novels, to popular novels, to writers with "messages", and finally to the classics.

Carlsen (1954) combines research from reading interest studies with the findings of adolescent psychology to answer the question: "What is there in young people that makes them choose certain kinds of content at this period of their lives?" He found that young people need assurance of status as human beings. In early childhood young people feel relatively secure because they accept willingly the care and attention of older people. As they grow up they go through a period of searching for reassurance of the importance of themselves and their potentialities. Another kind of reading interest is slapstick comedy. Young people can gain a sense of their own superiority through judging and ridiculing the antics of others. A second area of need in the developing adolescent is for assurance of his own normality. Young people are frightened by their sense of dislike or hatred of their parents. They want to see how people like themselves, facing the same sorts of problems and having the same qualities of

living, work out their particular problems and feelings. Through a book, the young person may test himself against others without his own privacy being invaded. A third need of young people that seems to indicate their reading choices, is need for role-playing. Young people want to test themselves in as many kinds of roles that is possible for a human being to play and to see what roles they may fit into and what roles are undesirable.

Attitudes toward books are usually regarded as a test of the taste and cultural values of an age. Ford (1961) attempted to answer the question, "What is a good book?" by basing his conclusions on the comments and opinions of more than two hundred senior high school students in forty-nine states. The teen-agers represented in this survey rate intellectual stimulation as the most satisfying quality of a good book. Moral and social insight ranks second and emotional satisfaction is ranked third. A fourth satisfying quality of a good book is the opportunity it offers for escape from overbearing tensions. And a fifth quality of a good book is its embodiment of sensual and spiritual beauty.

According to De Boer (1958) the amount of voluntary reading is approximately as great among boys as among girls. These findings are contrary to common opinion. He states that voluntary reading reaches its peak at about age twelve and tends to decline during the senior high school years.

Algra and Fillbrandt (1971) surveyed the voluntary pur-

chases of paperback books by ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students during a three year period. They concluded that a "free-choice" system commits students to books in a positive way. The results were evident by a higher reading ratio and greater enjoyment among the students than was found in a "forced-choice" system found in most English classes. It was also found that teacher recommendation influences students' book selections. Recommendations by other people and the stimulation of movies were other reasons for buying and reading books.

Gallo (1968) discovered contrary to many beliefs, that movies have a positive effect on reading. More than 62 percent of the eleventh graders surveyed had read a book after seeing the movie version. Gallo found that contrary to Algra and Fillbrandt's study mentioned previously, students go most often to friends for suggestions of a good book. Unfortunately, librarians are only used for suggestions of good books to read by five percent of the students surveyed.

There is nonconcurring evidence about the affect of socioeconomic areas on the reading interests of its students. De Boer (1958) states that socioeconomic status does not markedly affect young people's interests. A survey of ten high schools found the percentage of students who liked reading stayed constant at various socioeconomic levels, but the quality of the reading differed (Kujoth, 1959). Contradictory to these findings, Elliott and Steinkellner (1979) found

differences in reading interests in an inner-city and a suburban high school. They found stereotypical ideas about student reading interests were invalid. The urban vocational students reported a less negative response to poetry than did the suburban high school students enrolled in a college preparation curriculum. Andrew and Easley (1956) conclude from their research that the home environment appears to be a very significant factor in the cultural development and educational achievement of students.

In conclusion, it has been shown that high school students' reading interests are diversified and vary according to sex, age, socio-economic areas, and time in history. There is a constant need for current research concerning students' reading interests. The times are changing and the students' interests are changing also. It is suggested that teachers use their students' interests to plan for reading instruction. Teachers should help students to develop more efficient reading habits and skills so that they will enjoy the act of reading as well as the results. Teachers need to provide an assortment of reading materials "to satisfy and extend wholesome interests" (Witty, 1961). It would be beneficial for parents to set a good model for young people to emulate.

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APPENDIX

READING INTERESTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Grade _____ Sex: Male _____ Female _____

1. How much time do you spend reading outside of school per day?

___ 0-1 hours ___ 2-3 hours

___ 1-2 hours ___ more than 3 hours

2. What kinds of reading do you prefer? You may check more than one answer.

___ Articles in magazines

___ Articles in newspapers

___ Biography

___ Essays

___ Fiction

___ Plays

___ Poetry

___ Other (Please Specify) _____

3. What kinds of stories do you like to read? You may check more than one answer.

___ Adventure

___ Animal

___ Career

___ Humor

___ Mystery

___ Romance

___ Science Fiction

___ Sports

___ Westerns

___ Other (Please Specify) _____

4. What are your favorite books? You may list more than one title.

5. What books do you like to read other than storybooks? You may check more than one answer.

___ Careers

___ Famous people

___ People of other lands

___ Space travel

___ Travel

___ Other (Please Specify) _____

6. Do you prefer to read paperbacks or hard cover books?

7. What sections of the newspaper do you read? You may check more than one answer.

___ Front page

___ Editorial page

___ Social page

___ Sports page

___ Financial page

___ Comics

___ Want ads

___ Advertisements

___ Local news

___ World/ National news

___ Dear Abby

___ Amusement (TV/Movies) page

___ Other (Please Specify) _____

8. What magazines do you like best? You may list more than one.

9. What comic books do you like best? You may list more than one.

10. What comic strips in the newspaper do you like best? You may list more than one.

11. Where do you get most of your ideas for the books you read? You may check more than one answer.

___ Teachers

___ Parents

___ Friends

___ Librarians

___ Bookstores

___ Book reviews

___ Bestseller lists

___ Other (Please Specify) _____

12. Rank these seven activities in order of your preference.

___ Going to the movies

___ Listening to the radio

___ Reading comics

___ Reading magazines

___ Reading the newspaper

___ Reading stories in books

___ Watching television